Seminar in Comparative Politics
Political Science 7970

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Fall 2010
Fridays 9-12
210 Stubbs

Course Description

This course is a proseminar, i.e., a course designed primarily to provide the student with an introduction to the major concepts, theories, methods, and debates appropriate to the field of comparative politics. As such, and given the rather diverse nature of the field, a wide range of subject areas are confronted through an examination of prominent and representative samples from the relevant bodies of scholarly literature.

The field of comparative politics is very rich and varied, both substantively and methodologically. These characteristics are both a strength and a weakness, especially given the task that the course confronts in seeking a balanced and representative introduction to the field. In constructing the course, then, certain judgments must be made, certain compromises must be accepted, and certain values must be balanced off against others. What the course does claim to do is to provide an introduction to important themes and debates through an examination of prominent works and scholars.

Course Requirements

[1] In-Class Performance: Students are expected to come to each seminar meeting prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Everyone must be sure to come to class sessions ready to do his or her part in making the session a worthwhile learning environment. Students rely on each other in many important ways, and you have an obligation to your colleagues to pull your weight in the seminar. Needless to say, this role can be played only if you are in attendance and prepared thoroughly. (20 percent of the course grade)

[2] Two Short Papers: Each student will be obliged twice to prepare a short paper that analyzes and synthesizes a particular week’s readings. Each paper should be 6-8 pages (typed, double-spaced, normal fonts, fully cited). (15 percent each: 30 percent of the course grade)

[3] Literature Review/Conference Paper: Each student will have the opportunity to pursue in more depth one specific area of the comparative politics literature. Because by its nature the course must cover a wide variety of subjects in a single semester, this assignment will provide a chance to develop a deeper understanding of one part of comparative politics that is of particular interest to the student. This paper should be approximately 15-20 pages (typed, double-spaced, normal fonts, fully cited) and is due on or before the final class session on December 3, 2010. (30 percent of the course grade)
[4] Take-Home Final Exam: Near the end of the semester, the instructor will distribute questions for your consideration. You will be allotted a minimum of 10 days to respond in 10-12 pages. (20 percent of the course grade)

Required Texts

Each of the following books is required for the course and is available at bookstores that serve the LSU community. In addition to these works, a number of articles and chapters are included on the syllabus that follows.


Samuel P. Huntington (1968). Political Order in Changing Societies (Yale U Press).


Schedule of Weekly Topics and Readings

[1] The Historical Development of the Field of Comparative Politics (8/27)


[2] Issues, Debates and Controversies in Comparative Politics (9/3)


[3] Concepts, Methods, and Research Design in Comparative Politics (9/10)


Non-Democratic Regimes


Democracy and Democratization – I


[7] Democracy and Democratization – II


[8] Modernization and Revolution


[10] The Relationship between Economic and Political Development

Samuel P. Huntington (1968). Political Order in Changing Societies (Yale University Press).


[13] **Pre-Modern and Anti-Modern: Norms and Traditions in Politics**